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## REVIEW ARTICLE

RITUAL AND SOCIO-COSMIC ORDER  
IN EASTERN INDONESIAN SOCIETIESLINDA SUN CROWDER AND PATRICIA HORVATIC  
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*Rituals and Socio-Cosmic Order in Eastern Indonesian Societies*, ed. by C. Barraud and J. D. M. Platenkamp. Part I: *Nusa Tenggara Timur*. Special issue of *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde* 145:419-566. 1989. Part II: *Maluku*. Special issue of *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde* 146:1-126. 1990.

In 1989 and 1990 *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde* published two issues devoted to studies of ritual and society in Eastern Indonesia, volume 145, issue 4 and volume 146, issue 1. The first part of this set contains nine articles on Nusa Tenggara Timur; the second part contains six studies of Maluku societies. As an international compilation that includes the scholarship of anthropologists trained in the Netherlands, France, Great Britain, Australia, and the United States, this anthology is a singularly important contribution to the studies of Eastern Indonesian societies. Scholars who cannot read Dutch or French will delight in having more work by J. W. Ajawaila, C. Barraud, B. Renard-Clamagirand, C. Friedberg, and S. Pauwels available to them in English.

The stated goal of this two-part series is to make new material available and to advance the comparative study of ritual practices in Eastern Indonesia. Though there have been many recent studies on ritual in Eastern Indonesian societies, these studies are scattered in many journals and collections. Before these *Bijdragen* collections were published, there was neither an effort to compile studies on ritual in Eastern Indonesia nor any attempt to compare these practices in a systematic and holistic

fashion. Here lies the major contribution of this collection.

These two collections begin with a set of introductions that recognize and pay tribute to the work of the gifted Dutch scholar, F. A. E. van Wouden. R. Roolvink provides a brief biographical sketch of van Wouden's life and work, H. F. Vermeulen contributes a bibliography of van Wouden's published books and articles, and James Fox follows with an elaborated assessment of van Wouden's place in anthropological history and Eastern Indonesian scholarship. A concluding article by editors C. Barraud and J. D. M. Platenkamp outlines the objectives and theoretical focus for the series and attempts a comparison of three case studies.

Barraud and Platenkamp argue that their project is not one of offering theoretical reflections on the nature of ritual in Eastern Indonesia. Rather, they have urged contributing authors to focus upon how ritual relates to society to allow for a comparison of the ways societies are structured in their ritual actions. The editors perceive this focus as part of van Wouden's project, one that emphasizes the totality of culture and the interrelation of culture and society, cosmology and kinship, and myth and social structure. Though the editors follow van Wouden's lead, they explicitly reject his premise that the form of social structure generated by cross-cousin marriage shapes or determines other social and symbolic categories. In other words, the editors refuse to accord primacy to either social structure or ritual.

The editors also critique the arguments of P. E. de Josselin de Jong, Rodney Needham, and other anthropologists who have argued that cultural differences in Eastern Indonesia are simply variations or transformations of more general models. Though cultural idioms like "the house" and "the flow of life" may be shared by different societies, the meanings associated with these symbols often vary. The editors argue that each society in Eastern Indonesia must be studied on its own terms, and that the occurrence of similar idioms, expressions, and symbols in different societies should not lead anthropologists to assume they understand what these things mean. Again, the focus is not upon the comparison of constituent cultural elements in societies, but upon social wholes.

The rituals examined in these volumes are quite varied, ranging from the ritual carving and offering of a sea turtle to a celebratory night dance. Other rituals mark calendrical/agricultural cycles, marriage, death, expia-

tion, and are performed to promote fertility or rectify wrongdoing. Some of these rituals were observed by anthropologists, one ritual was sponsored by the anthropologist, and other rituals are now memories, reconstructed by anthropologists from various historical sources and the recollections of their informants. Though their subject matter varies, the contributors to these two collections share a common theoretical perspective that emphasizes the relation of ritual to culture and society, allowing comparisons of Eastern Indonesian social wholes.

### Part One: Rituals in Nusa Tenggara Timur

The first part of this two-part series deals exclusively with Nusa Tenggara Timur and is devoted to the rituals of nine societies of Sumba, Flores, Lamalera, Roti, and Timor. Janet Hoskins provides the first article. In her paper, "Burned Paddy and Lost Souls," Hoskins discusses how rice and humans have a parallel identity that is expressed in metaphor and metonym in West Sumba. When rice or humans of Kodi suffer a violent or "bad" death, the honor of their souls is restored by *yaigho*, a singing oratory ceremony, that also restores the integrity of the crop. The symbolic association of rice and humans is so intimately entwined, that the eating of rice is, on a symbolic level, equivalent to consuming the bodies of one's ancestors. According to Hoskins (1989:442), "The lunar calendar of ritual activities provides an escape from this cannibalistic circle by establishing temporal boundaries which delimit when the rice is identified with its human origin."

In "The *Pogo Nauta* Ritual in Laboya (West Sumba): Of Tubers and Mamuli," Danielle Geirnaert argues that an understanding of the various components of living beings and inanimate objects in holistic societies is often hindered when approached with dichotomous Western conceptions of the body and the soul. Geirnaert (1989:445) argues that rituals for spirits affect economic and social relationships and that this is meaningful only when anthropologists realize that "the components of a person are part of a wider socio-cosmic whole, and are often represented by specific objects that circulate among members of a community."

Geirnaert explains that the *Pogo nauta* ritual is performed to recover the components of victims who suffer untimely, accidental deaths. The bodies of the deceased are symbolically reconstructed with personal affects and valued heirlooms. This ritual involves the slaughter of animals and an elaborate exchange of gifts between wife-takers and wife-

givers. *Pogo nauta* rituals are so costly that they are seldom performed, though they are often discussed as if they were imminent. Such discussions serve as a sign that kin recognize their duties and obligations within the Laboya system of exchange. *Pogo nauta* rituals thus address the peace of the spirits, the regeneration of nature, the enhancement of lineage-house status, and the strengthening of family ties.

Brigitte Renard-Clamagirand also analyzes a ritual that fulfills a promise made to ancestors in her article, "*Uppu Li'i*, 'Fulfill the Promise': Analysis of a Wewewa Ritual." For the Wewewa of the central highlands of West Sumba, any sensation out of the ordinary is interpreted as a sign of the invisible. The constant, interweaving exchange of the living with their ancestors and pervasive spirits creates a fabric of life that does not distinguish between the visible and invisible. As social life is also strongly ritualized, Renard-Clamagirand contends that an examination of the *uppu li'i*—particularly in the case where the promise has been neglected—reveals the social functioning and ethos of the Wewewa and their relationships with their ancestors.

Through divination and dreams, the ancestral spirits communicate their pleasure or discontent to the Wewewa. Ritual offerings are made to rectify unkept promises and to offer thanks to the ancestors; the *uppu li'i* exchanges animal sacrifices for spiritual blessings of prosperity. The greater the sacrifice, the more impressive is the meat distribution and feasting, all of which glorify the ancestor and the lineage. On the social level, exchanges conducted between clan groups establish social status and reaffirm social ties.

Interconnection of spirits, ancestral houses, regeneration, and exchange within and between lineage groups is also a theme in Masao Yamaguchi's article, "*Nai Keu*, A Ritual of the Lio of Central Flores." Lio sacred ancestral houses are cosmic models of the universe. Embracing social and cosmic metaphors of the snake, boat, and creation myths of the first ancestor of the Lio, the sacred house serves as the ritual performance stage for the annual ritual cycle that begins after the harvest. As part of this cycle, the *nai keu* symbolically acknowledges the reenactment of Lio creation, thereby restoring the tie between the heavens and earth. In conjunction with this cosmic bonding, the Lio exchange goods in reverse direction between wife-takers and wife-givers, an exchange that solidifies social ties.

As with most key cultural rituals, the *nai keu* is layered with multiple dimensions that reify each strata of symbols. As Yamaguchi (1989:488) explains,

I have tried to reveal the parallelism that exists between the cosmology, the lay-out of the village, the house form, the image of the human body, agricultural activity, and the social structure. The *nai keu* ritual is the occasion on which the levels are made explicit and people are integrated in the most comprehensive totality.

Ritual to restore harmony and balance between humans and the spirit world, operationalized through curing ceremonies, is the subject of the article by E. D. Lewis, "Word and Act in the Curing Rituals of the Ata Tana 'Ai of Flores." Because every act has consequences regardless of its intention, it is possible for misfortune to occur, not only to the actor involved, but to his or her kin and consociates. When misfortune does occur, the Ata Tana 'Ai seek to discover its origin and seek to undo and correct past acts through ritual. Disquieted spirits of nature and the recent dead are often sources of illness and danger to humans.

The curing ritual of *kula kara* rectifies any wrongdoing and pacifies "hot" and dangerous spirits by ritually situating them in a proper, stable place. Distinctions between illness and good health is dualistically categorized as "heated," "hot," and agitated versus "cool," "quiet," and passive. The cool, healthy state is also a fertile, productive one in terms of agricultural growth. A balanced world requires that all elements be in their proper domain. Ritual thus restores order by reclassifying things and persons within stable categories.

Like the Ata Tana 'Ai of Flores, the Lamalera also regard personal indiscretions as creating an imbalance or disturbance of the natural order of things which may spur supernatural repercussions. R. H. Barnes's article, "Mei Nafa, A Rite of Expiation in Lamalera, Indonesia," discusses the rites that deal with personal responsibility for individual or collective suffering.

The organized search for the cause of misfortune is called *mei nafa*, *mei* meaning 'blood', and *nafa* referring to the soul. One of Barnes's informants glossed the phrase as referring to the return of hot blood to oneself or one's clan if, for example, one murders another and nothing is done to set it right. Improper actions affect relations between the spirits and the living, particularly between ancestors and their descendants. Through public pressure, omens, and ceremonies that talk of family



history, confessions, complaints, and that include singing and food contributions to the spirits, the case of sudden death, illness, and other disasters is eventually diagnosed. Along with his documentation of the various types of curing rites, Barnes mentions an important aspect of modern Lamalera belief systems: the position of Christianity and the ways Christianity exists with current traditional practices.

Gregory Forth's article, "The *Pa Sese* Festival of the Nage of Bo'a Wae (Central Flores)," analyzes traditional Nage society through its key, focal ritual, the *pa sese*. This ritual, like the cult house it commemorates, involves large-scale cooperation of descent groups. By their participation in the *pa sese* festival, individuals and groups confirm their membership, claim their land rights, and fulfill their obligations (kin and social) to their descent groups. The *pa sese* is renowned for its dramatic slaughter of numerous water buffaloes. These large bovines are highly valued as sacrifices because they embody tremendous life energy; the shedding of their blood is requisite to guarantee a regeneration of fecundity and prosperity, making the *pa sese* ritual a festival of thanksgiving and plenty.

The theme of identity is prominent in Forth's fascinating symbolic interpretation of this multivocal ritual. The interaction within the group and between the sponsors of the event and their guests expresses and validates a hierarchical order of social relationships. Ritual actions thus establish social identity. Cultural group identity is also reinforced with the buffalo representing the enemy "other" [our use of the term, not Forth's]. Though the buffalo embodies a threatening spirit or a surrogate enemy, it is also strongly identified with humans, which makes the buffalo a suitable substitute for human sacrifice. The *pa sese* is a bloody battle between men and beasts that is seen as a contest of competing forces that deny life. As Forth (1989:513-514) explains,

humans must destroy the spirits before the spirits destroy them, both being vulnerable in the form of buffalo.... In a sense, the Nage are fighting for their lives. The spirits whose deaths the slaughter of buffalo bring about are said to kill and eat humans. By performing *pa*, therefore, Nage not only prevent this from happening, by as it were launching a preemptive attack; they also eat the spirits in the form of buffalo, so that the potentially eaten becomes the eater.

The personal experience of honoring an illustrious family ancestor by sponsoring a magnanimous memorial feast is well documented by James J. Fox in his article, "To the Aroma of the Name: The Celebration of a

Rotinese Ritual of Rock and Tree." During his fieldwork in Roti, Fox was adopted as a "son" by his mentor and chief informant, a prominent old man referred to as "Meno." Meno died some years later, after Fox had completed his fieldwork and left Roti. Upon his return to Roti, Fox held a mortuary ritual in Meno's honor that included the erection of a *tutus* (a stone seating platform that serves as a monument to the deceased), chanting ceremonies, feasting, and general festivities. Such ritual honors are reserved only for individuals who have a notable genealogy that can be traced to ancestral spirits of renown, whose names carry an "aroma." The chanting of one's genealogy and historical family events at *tutus* ceremonies is, therefore, significant.

Many issues that came to Fox's attention during the ritual preparations reflect the social structure and cosmic views of the Rotinese. For example, the location for the *tutus* was negotiated and politically determined on the basis of particular family lineages; families tried to strike a balance of complementary opposition between neighboring villages in terms of bureaucratic structure; and the name for the *tutus*, also based on complementary opposition, was a significant symbolic act.

Claudine Friedberg's article is the last of the nine articles on ritual in Nusa Tenggara Timur in Part I of the *Bijdragen* series. Her article, "Social Relations of Territorial Management in Light of Bunaq Farming Rituals," describes the agricultural farming rites of the Bunaq of Upper Lamaknen in Timor, and discusses how these rites reveal the social relationships of the Bunaq. The house is the basic unit of this society, with their designation as *malu ai* or *ai бага* determining the direction in which wives and gender-associated goods circulate. *Malu ai* houses give wives, pigs, and cloth, while *ai бага* houses receive wives and give money and buffaloes. Rituals that occur at the village level address the larger territorial domain, while those at the level of the house relate to its ancestors. As Friedberg (1989:558) argues,

At each level, however, elements are called upon which refer to the village as a global society. Other elements stress the fact that the society depends for its very existence upon a flow of life-force. This flow originates in the *malu* houses that are sometimes far removed in time and space; and it reaches the *ai бага* houses, which may belong to different villages.

## Part Two: Rituals in Maluku

The second part of the *Bijdragen* series concentrates upon societies in the province of Maluku. Malukan societies are well represented with studies of the Galela and Tobelo of North Halmahera, the Huaulu of Seram, people of Luang and Marsela in the Babar Islands, members of Hursu society of the Tanimbar archipelago, and the Kei people of the Kei Islands.

This collection begins with an interesting article by T. van Dijk and N. de Jonge entitled, "After Sunshine Comes Rain: A Comparative Analysis of Fertility Rituals in Marsela and Luang, South-East Moluccas." Van Dijk and de Jonge compare fertility rituals in two societies of the Babar Islands: in Marsela, a patrilineal, patrilocal society; and in Luang, a matrilineal, matrilocal society. Examining a similar ritual in these very different societies enables van Dijk and de Jonge to see different manifestations of what they take to be the same ordering principle. For example, these anthropologists found two manifestations of the "sacred marriage," reflecting two local transformations of the same category.

Due to the pervasive influence of Christianity in the area, van Dijk and de Jonge rely on unpublished source materials as well as some direct observation of these traditional rituals. Particularly fascinating was the authors' discussion of fertility rituals. As in the article by Lewis in this collection, and elaborated elsewhere by Valeri (1990), reproduction must occur in a state of coolness. Van Dijk and de Jonge argue that this hot-cold dualism relates to a broader cosmology, particularly to beliefs about reproduction and gender relations. They argue that though hot and cold are complimentary, coolness dominates hotness. Warfare, a man's activity, is thus subservient to childbirth, the domain of women. As the life-giving force in the Babar Islands, women thus represent their communities on a permanent basis.

This very intriguing conclusion was made in the last paragraphs of this article and virtually cries out for explanation and qualification. Van Dijk's and de Jonge's analysis is not sensitive to context; indeed, they suggest that symbolic categories and the activities of men and women remain historically and situationally constant. Such conclusions may be questioned by readers of Valeri's (1990) and McKinnon's (1992) analyses of gender in Maluku societies. Both Valeri and McKinnon show that women may have power in some contexts, but are powerless in others;

women may be the roots of their families within some domains, but are seen as the transient members of their families in other social spheres. Though their work has potential, van Dijk and de Jonge must develop their arguments in relation to the other very fine work on gender and symbolic dualism by Hoskins (1987), McKinnon (1992), and Valeri (1990).

Simone Pauwels, like Friedberg, focuses upon rituals associated with agricultural production in her article "From Hursu Ribun's 'Three Hearth Stones' to Metanleru's 'Sailing Boat': A Ritual After the Harvest." Pauwels worked in Hursu society on Selaru Island in the Tanimbar archipelago. Her study reviews the rituals that constitute annual cycles in Hursu society, with particular attention to the transitional ritual performed when all agricultural tasks have been completed. In speaking about their society, the members of Hursu village use two names, Hursu Ribun and Metanleru. The use of these names depends upon the specific activities and set of related ideas associated with each. Hursu Ribun is the name applied during the agricultural period, while Metanleru is applied during the period of marriage and war. Pauwels focuses upon the periods of transition and the role of ritual in the subordination of each name and the activities associated with the agricultural cycle.

In "A Turtle Turned on the Sand in the Kei Islands: Society's Shares and Values," Cecile Barraud shows that an analysis of "the ritual for the turtle" (the ritual carving and offering of the sea turtle) promotes an understanding of the local terms for society, *lor* and *haratut*, and illuminates the systems of ideas and values that these terms embody. Barraud argues that the ritual for the turtle is an important one to focus on because the offering of a turtle caught on the beach and the purification of the village when incest has occurred are the only two occasions in which a ritual is performed in the name of both *lor* and *haratut*. After a discussion and analysis of the "ritual for the turtle," Barraud argues that the analysis of ritual leads to better understandings of aspects of social morphology conceived of as part of the socio-cosmic order. Barraud argues that this central ritual for the turtle emphasizes the permanence of the encompassing socio-economic order understood as a whole.

Valerio Valeri analyzes the ways the *kahua* gives the Huaulu of Northern Seram a sense of collective strength as he examines the continuities and changes in the means employed by the feast to achieve this result. Valeri's article is entitled, "Autonomy and Heteronomy in the



*Kahua* Ritual: A Short Meditation on Huauulu Society." The *kahua* refers to an entire feast in which the night dance is a major component. *Kahua* are held to celebrate events that enhance community pride and confirm its vitality. In the past, for example, the *kahua* might be performed after a successful headhunting raid.

Valeri examines the place of the *kahua* in the dialectics of concentration and dispersion, heteronomy and autonomy in Huauulu society. By obligating all members of a community to attend, the *kahua* constitutes the most encompassing and intense state of social relations in Huauulu society. As men and unmarried women move in coordinated unison, this dance represents their mutually accepted interdependence and thus serves to resocialize the Huauulu, if only for awhile. At dawn, however, the night dance shifts to the violent, exclusively male war dance, the *usali*. The *usali* represents a violent affirmation of each man's autonomy. Valeri argues that the transformation from autonomy to heteronomy delineates tension within the feast and also within Huauulu society.

Those familiar with Dirk Nijland's award-winning film, "Tobelo Marriage," will want to know more about the ritual captured, but not thoroughly explained, in this production. We thus encourage curious viewers to read J. D. M. Platenkamp's "The Severance of the Origin: A Ritual of the Tobelo of North Halmahera." The severance of the origin is a ritual that may be performed after the contraction of a marriage between a man and a woman who belong to the same House. This marriage, which violates a positive rule of exogamy, demands that the relationship of the groom's family with their House's ancestral "origin" be severed to prevent a reaction of cosmic dimensions. The Tobelo believe that close marriages, if not balanced by sister exchange or the waiving of the bridewealth, result in *dopaha*, disastrous rains, storms, and floods. If no sister exchange takes place or the woman's family will not waive her bridewealth, there is only one way to avert this catastrophe: the ritual of "the severance of the origin" must be performed. By performing this ritual, the relations between the woman's side and the man's side, previously members of one House, are transformed into relations between strangers. Since they no longer share the same origin, a marriage between their descendants may be contracted without fear of cosmic interference.

Platenkamp argues that the "severance of the origin" represents an overt expression of a particular hierarchization of the values that consti-

tute Tobelo society as a socio-cosmic whole. He shows that Tobelo ideas and values are formulated in myths and are operative in structuring marriage exchange.

The last article of this series, also dealing with relations of marriage, is "Marriage Rituals of the Galela People" by J. W. Ajawaila. Although this article deals with practices of the Galela, it too is a useful supplement to the film "Tobelo Marriage." Because this brief article so nicely outlines the rituals and exchanges involved in contracting marriages in North Halmahera, we find it a useful work to assign to students who have viewed "Tobelo Marriage" and wish to know more about these types of marriage practices. This article begins with preliminary marriage negotiations, and goes on to discuss wedding preparations, the marriage ceremony, and the exchange of gifts.

### Concluding Remarks

What is striking about the belief systems of Eastern Indonesian societies is the extent to which spirits are integral to the cause-and-effect rationale by which people of these cultures live their lives. In ancestral belief systems, or "religion of the ancestors," rituals that appeal to ancestors and spirits serve several overlapping purposes of social and cosmic consideration. For example, rituals serve the purpose of:

- (1) the propagation of fertile crops and people;
- (2) the correction of social and spiritual moral wrongdoing;
- (3) the fulfillment of traditional obligations;
- (4) the appeasement of angry or displaced spirits;
- (5) the validation of group membership and bonds;
- (6) the restoration of order and balance to the relationship between the living and spirit world; and
- (7) the protection of the living from human enemies, misfortune, and dangerous spirits.

Rituals of curing, life passage, agriculture, and lineage inevitably invoke the ancestors who require animal sacrifices, offerings, and feasts in exchange for blessings and status. Often elaborate organizational affairs, cooperative rituals foster common beliefs and further the self-awareness of families and communities. The result of these rituals is often a reaffirmed, cohesive cultural collective. The articles in this collection show that rituals provide the connective tissue for the continuum of history and identity in Eastern Indonesian communities.

The vast area and numerous cultural groups of Eastern Indonesia have kept the collection of ethnographic studies of this region from being anywhere near complete. *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde* is to be complimented for contributing both attention and resources to Eastern Indonesian scholarship. The sixteen articles contained in these collections comprise a useful pool of ethnographic information from which scholars may draw for comparative, cross-cultural analysis. Since interpretations relating to current anthropological discourse and larger operating theories are absent or at a minimum, these articles provide a useful source for the creation of models and broader nomothetic concepts.

Although the descriptive material in these collections is interesting, and at times very insightful, the reader will not be startled by theoretical insights or be provoked to consider studies of ritual in new ways. The disappointment is that this collection held the potential to offer new understandings of ritual in Eastern Indonesian societies. The editors' criticisms of "descent group" categories, their challenging of the primacy accorded by anthropologists to affinity and exchange theory and their questioning of ritual categorization held initial promise as stimulus for reevaluating existing concepts. The furthering of any significant ideological development was, however, thwarted by theoretical arguments that remained vague, diffuse, and hesitant. Barraud and Platenkamp could have provided a powerful critique of structural anthropology in their concluding article by making reference to work on poststructuralism, relying, for example, on the work of Bourdieu (1977), Geertz (1973), or Giddens (1979). References to such critiques of structuralism would have offered the editors and contributors a way to discuss, and perhaps go beyond, the dualism between ritual and social structure—a dualism they lament but fail to transcend.

Particularly notable in the articles of all but two contributors is the lack of reference to American anthropological theory. The work of Clifford Geertz, Sherry Ortner, Marshall Sahlins, and Victor Turner goes unrecognized in all articles except those of Forge and Valeri. Though this collection is theoretically unpretentious, we find the omission of major American work on ritual and society in a collection devoted to ritual analysis disturbing.

This anthology would also have been improved if consideration of the historical and political context had been incorporated into the analy-

ses. Most of the contributors present synchronic, functional discussions of ritual and minimize the historical, political, and diachronic aspects of ritual and religious change in Eastern Indonesian societies. Indeed, ritual and religious change in Indonesia has been the subject of current anthropological attention and the focus of two recent collections: *Indonesian Religions in Transition* (1987), edited by Rita Smith Kipp and Susan Rodgers, and *Changing Lives, Changing Rites: Ritual and Social Dynamics in Philippine and Indonesian Uplands* (1989), edited by Susan D. Russell and Clark E. Cunningham. We were surprised that R. H. Barnes was the only contributor to refer to the book by Kipp and Rodgers, and disappointed that contributors did not present more complex analyses of the ways history and political-economics have impacted traditional practices and rituals.

We were also dismayed to find that none of these articles address the practice of Muslim or Christian rituals in Eastern Indonesia. As critics have argued, Western social scientists have consistently diminished the place and role of Islam (and, we would add, Christianity) in the lives of Southeast Asian peoples (cf. Bowen 1992; Ellen 1983; Roff 1985; and Woodward 1988, 1989). Anthropologists, in particular, have not devoted adequate attention to the ways societies have constructed local understandings of Islam and Christianity within historical contexts and relations of power. Studies of Islam and Christianity in Southeast Asia have clearly suffered as anthropologists have concentrated their search for meaning on ahistorical nativism embodied in *adat*—indigenous traditions presumed to lie underneath the "thin veneer of Islam" and, as such, to be more "real" to people. The contributors of the special issue of *Bijdragen* seem unaware of these criticisms as many of them reconstruct traditional belief systems before the advent of Christianity and Islam, or simply ignore, or dismiss as superficial, modern religious syncretism. This *Bijdragen* collection would have been enriched and more critically well-received had some of the contributors addressed the criticisms of Ellen (1983) and Roff (1985) and responded to the challenge that they pose.

These points aside, we believe that this collection of articles represents a substantial contribution to the literature on ritual in Eastern Indonesian societies and will therefore be of considerable value to social scientists interested in these societies.

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*Mai Ite Lepa Alune* ["Let's speak Alune"] is a collection of some two hundred brief conversations in the Alune language, spoken in approximately 26 villages in western Seram, Central Maluku. The book has arisen largely through research undertaken by Yushin and Takako Taguchi, working for the Summer Institute of Linguistics of Maluku, and their Indonesian counterparts from Pattimura University.

The volume is most usefully considered as a potential contribution to the maintenance of the Alune language. It has been well established that the majority of languages spoken in Christian villages in Central Maluku are endangered (cf. Collins 1982, Florey 1990, 1991, 1993). Language shift to Ambonese Malay and Indonesian is occurring in Alune villages, including including Kamal, Nurue, and Lohiatata, which relocated to the south coast of Seram during the RMS conflict in the 1950s. The process is reflected in intergenerational syntactic and phonological changes together with extensive code-switching and the use of Malay loanwords. Language shift is proceeding more rapidly toward language obsolescence in villages that relocated to the north coast early in this century, such as Murnaten and Nikulkan, and have therefore been subjected to a much longer period of frequent contact with speakers of other languages. Community members under thirty years of age in these villages exhibit a marked reluctance and/or inability to speak (and, in many cases, to comprehend) Alune.

Although the Alune language is still in daily use in villages in the interior of west Seram, recent research indicates that the process of language